

The Testimony of God - First Corinthians 2:1-5 (Cont. from pg. 3)

well as our understanding of the desires and leanings of our friends in the world, how do we avoid the discouragement that naturally seems to follow when those we love choose the things of this world over the gospel? This has been a problem to the faithful from the beginning until now. Moses became frustrated during the long drawn out deliverance of the Israelites from the Egyptians. Elijah was discouraged while being threatened by Ahab and

Jezebel. What enabled them to accomplish His Will in spite of their discouragement was their trust in Him to work His Will through them. If we will trust in Him, He will at His time and place bring about what He has planned.

Let it be said of us as Nehemiah said of the people as they rebuilt the walls of the city, that we had a mind to work.



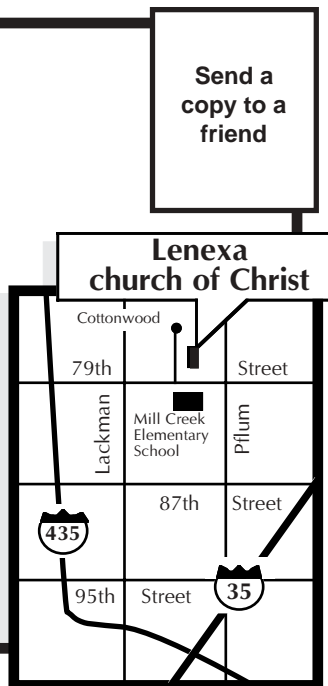
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Documenting Your Source

by Kyle Pope

When I was in school, like most of us, I had to write papers from time to time. Whether it was English, History, Science or another field all classes required so many papers per semester. The reason, while hard to accept at the time, was the fact that the study necessary to write something for ourself teaches us much more than listening to a lecture or filling out answers to a set of questions. One element required in such papers was "documentation." A student could not just state things as fact without applying some system to let the reader know where they got the information they were citing. This could be footnotes (a real headache before personal computers) or reference to a list of "works cited" at the end of the paper, when the fact was mentioned in the paper itself. Strict rules were set forth at the beginning of the class about how sources were to be listed, including the author, the publisher and the date of the source. This allowed the reader (if they chose to) a way to verify the fact which was

asserted in the paper.

Back then, I didn't appreciate what a valuable discipline this was. I, like so many others, moaned and groaned at having to follow those "silly rules" and track down sources I may have forgotten to write down. Looking back, however, I have come to appreciate how valuable (and necessary) this process is in establishing the authority behind information. Grant Crawford, one of our deacons, just recently completed his Doctoral Dissertation. This process involved months of research, mountains of documentation and an oral defense of his work before a committee of advisors in his field. As difficult as this process was, it exists to allow him and any others that might read his work a measure of assurance that the facts he puts forth are verified and reliable.

While we can understand the importance of this in secular fields like Chemistry, Biology or Physics, what about Religion? When dealing with matters that - (Cont. on pg 2)

Documenting Your Source

(Cont. from pg. 1) - concern our soul, our relationship to God and where we will spend eternity, should it be less important to us to document the source of our assertions? If anything, it should be much more important to make certain that the statements we make, the convictions we hold and the beliefs we stand upon are grounded on a reliable and verifiable source in something with eternal consequences.

For some reason though, that's not the way it is for much of the religious world. People act as if they can base their beliefs about God, salvation and how to worship Him on our own feelings and intuition. One person says and thinks one thing and another something completely different. How would we feel if, when we are sick, we went to a doctor who based his diagnosis on his own feelings, rather than research and reliable sources regarding our illness? How would we feel, if we got on an airplane and learned that the the engineer who designed the plane just went with "what he knew in his heart" was right? Would you volunteer for that plane's first flight?

The Bible is man's source for all that we need to serve God and go to heaven. My source for that assertion is what the Bible says about itself. II Timothy 3:16-17 declares: "All

Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,

that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." (NKJV). It was revealed in such a way that human beings can read it and understand what it means. In Ephesians 3:4, the Apostle Paul states: "...when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ." One day, all men will be judged by what the Lord has revealed to us. The Bible will serve as the standard of that judgment. Jesus said: "He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day" (John 12:48). Don't accept anything that is put forth in matters of faith if someone is not willing (and able) to "document their source." It is your responsibility and mine to test the things that are said and done to make certain they are true. First John 4:1 warns: "...do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world." More important than any secular field, we must verify those things we accept in matters of faith. Second Timothy 2:15 charges us: "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."



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The Testimony of God - I Corinthians 2:1-5

by Jim Stauffer

In these verses and in the remainder of the chapter, Paul makes the argument that he came to them proclaiming the testimony of God. In saying this he draws a line regarding the gospel that cannot be crossed by man then or now. It is not the persuasive words of any man that carry the power Paul attributes to the gospel in Rom. 1:16 when he says it is the power of God unto salvation to all men. It is rather the trustworthy nature of God that causes Him to honor His word now as He did then and in the time of Abraham. (Heb.6:17,18) When Paul says he was determined to know nothing save Jesus Christ and Him crucified, he was leading them to his own conclusion, that they should not have their faith based in the wisdom of men but rather in the power of God. By doing this, Paul was not simply making a preferred argument, but rather was causing them to trust in the One who had the power to save.

Having made his point about God's power and their need to depend upon it, Paul now spends the remainder of the chapter connecting his teaching to the Spirit of God who revealed to him the mind of God. This point is made in such

detail in verse 13, that we come to understand the words Paul wrote were directed specifically by the Holy Spirit. Throughout his writings to the Corinthians, his only reason for asking them to do what he says is because it came from God.

While none of this is new to us, it reminds us of our most sacred trust as servants of God. We must minimize our own selves in preaching and teaching the gospel to our friends and neighbors and emphasize God and His Word so their trust and reliance is not in us but in God. We will always face that discouraging fact that many will be looking for the well turned phrases of men who are professional speakers with shiny resumes and not be impressed with the simple message of spiritual renewal presented in the gospel. After all, the Lord said in Matt. 7:13,14 that the way to destruction is appealing to far more than the way to life. However, if we have placed our trust in God and His power it will become our greatest desire to share the message with those we come to know and love, realizing their only hope is in the power that only God has.

Understanding what we do about the power of the gospel as (Cont. on pg. 4)